

measure the peace of the disturbed country by a general pardon of rebels, and at the same time to reassure the proprietary classes by strongly repudiating any measure for the liberation of serfs. But the Commons did not consider that they had by so doing dealt with the Rising in all its aspects. They regarded the riots as having been caused, not merely by quarrels of serf and lord, but also by inefficient and oppressive administration. The knights of the shire disliked the rebels as social reformers, but almost approved of them as political agitators. It was clear, the Commons said, that there were many faults in the government, especially in the King's Household, where an outrageous number of needy and greedy parasites were maintained. These men, together with the officers of the Law Courts and the Exchequer, grievously oppressed the country districts by seizing men's goods in the King's name under pretence of Purveyance, by raising the taxes exorbitantly, and by every form of semi-legal robbery. The petition does not attempt to make any distinction between these extortioners from Westminster and the local embracers of quarrels and maintainers who are like kings in the country-side/ The nation could no longer endure the \* oppressions done to them by divers servants of the King and of other seigneurs of the kingdom, and especially by the said maintainers.' It was to these grievances that the Commons attributed the late revolt.<sup>1</sup>

The country was indeed in an unfortunate condition, when the royal officers who should have defended the subject from the lords' retainers, were themselves a thorn in the side of honest men. It was for this reason that when Richard attempted to set up a strong personal government and to crush the power of the nobles, he obtained no support from the Commons. The small country-gentleman had learnt by constant and bitter experience to dread the arrival of royal commissioners in his neighbourhood, no whit less than he dreaded the retainers and bailiffs of the local baron. He was too wise to make himself a party to the establishment of a despotism which only made the flights of greedy locusts from the Court more frequent and more

<sup>1</sup> *Hot. Parl.*, iii. 100.